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ABSTRACT

Three papers that examine emerging issues in school board governance comprise this document. The first, "The Changing Role of the Ontario School Trustee," by John Davis, explores changes in the amount of time spent by trustees in fulfilling their job responsibilities. Based on questionnaires and interviews with trustees, implications of changes in the trusteeship are discussed. The second paper, "Governance and Accountability: The Current Situation in Ontario," by John H. House, examines issues in the structure of school governance and in the trustee/school board relationship. "The Role of the Francophone School Trustee in Ontario," by Guy G. Tetrault, discusses the impact on the role of the trustee of legislation that extended Canadian Francophones' right to receive and control an education in French. References accompany each article. (LMI)

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EMERGING ISSUES IN SCHOOL BOARD GOVERNANCE

Three Papers
Presented at the 1991 Annual CSSE Conference
Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario
June, 1991

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THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE ONTARIO SCHOOL TRUSTEE

Presented at the 1991 Annual CSSE Conference
Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario
June, 1991

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THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE ONTARIO SCHOOL TRUSTEE

Over the past decade some significant changes have taken place in the role of the school trustee in Ontario. To some extent these changes have been regional; the differences in roles between urban and rural trustees is still evident, but the most significant change appears to be in the amount of time that trustees are spending on their trusteeship. Across the province, from small northern rural boards to the large urban boards of the southern part of the province, trustees report spending more time now that they did just a few years ago.

The data which form the basis for this report come from approximately 160 questionnaires returned by trustees from across the province and from almost fifty trustee interviews conducted over the past two years by graduate students from a class in administrator-trustee relationships.

A major finding of the study concerned the amount of time trustees devoted to their jobs. It varied from seventeen to three hundred hours per month. In the southern part of the province, several trustees reported that they consider their trusteeship to be a full time occupation. Indeed, the Toronto Board of Education now pays its trustees about $50,000 annually in order to attract trustees who will serve in their positions full time. In other parts of the province, trustee honoraria are as low as $2,400 annually.[1]

The appearance of full-time trustees has occurred within the decade. Documentation of their existence may be found in Jakes' 1982 study. It is interesting to note that Jakes reported that, at that time, only 14% of the Ontario trustees he surveyed favoured the concept of the full-time trustee. Comparable data from the current study are not available; however, the data do show that many trustees are opposed, and sometimes bitterly, to the concept of 'full time'. In some boards there is open conflict between the 'full-timers' and the 'part-

[1] In some parts of Canada trustees still perform their roles without remuneration.

timers'.

Who are these people who spend large amounts of time on their trusteeship? For the most part, they are members of large urban boards; they are usually women or retired men. The majority of them are quite new to their office, serving their second or third term. Southern Ontario trustees tend to be younger than their northern counterparts. Consequently, full time trustees also tend to be younger persons except, of course, those who are retired from previous occupations. Women tend to outnumber the men.

How do trustees who spend considerable amounts of time on the job use their time? A large block of time appears to be spent in schools; another large block is spent at the board office. During their visits to schools, trustees attend meetings with parents, and participate in formal occasions such as graduations and school concerts. There is an increasing trend to spend time with principals discussing school programs, facilities and problems as well as checking upon the implementation of board policies. Many full time trustees make a point of discussing programs and problems with teachers. Some play a mediating role in school disputes; others have even become involved in evaluating classroom practice and passing on their observations to principals and superintendents. On their part, some principals have not been averse to using their trustees' services to short circuit the standard operating procedures of the system in order to get speedy action on school-level concerns. It is interesting to observe that while extensive trustee involvement is going on in some systems, in others trustees are not permitted to go into the schools without having received prior permission.

A great amount of trustee time is spent at board and committee meetings. One trustee reported being a member or sixteen committees! Boards using an elaborate committee structure are usually found in urban centres, areas where

there are also likely to be greater numbers of trustees spending many hours a week in their trustee roles. Trustees who report spending large amounts of time at the board offices also state that much of it involves discussing policy with administrative staff and seeking information in order to give themselves a better base for decision-making.

What are some of the characteristics of today's trustees? Trustees at or near full-time status are predominately women, aged between 35 and 55, or they are males who either are retired or occupy positions in which they have a sufficient number of flexible hours to be able to spend time during the day on board-related business. Part time trustees are most frequently men, self employed or employed in professions or semi professions. Northern Ontario trustees are older than their southern counterparts. Female trustees reported more often than males that they voted on the basis of firmly held convictions rather than on the perceived opinion of their constituents. Both men and women, however, indicate spending increasing amounts of time trying to keep in touch with their constituents, either by using newsletters, by making a conscious effort to appear in public meetings,by making themselves available on the telephone and by trying to respond to requests for appearances at various types of educational functions.

What might be some of the implications of these changes in the trusteeship? First, it would appear that a chicken-egg question exists with respect to trustee time and trustee politicization. Has the increased time that trustees have been spending in their role been responsible for their desire to become increasingly involved in school governance, or has the general trend across the country for greater local control of government been the impetus which has prompted certain individuals to spend more time in their trusteeship? Whatever the reason, there is no doubt but that trustees are becoming more political in their actions and, as Cistone observed twenty years ago

> Ultimately, the politics of education revolves around a number of vital value conflicts...The most fundamental conflict today relates to two competing values: popular participation and professional autonomy (Cistone, 1972,4).

Another consequence of the trend towards full time trustees has been sharp debate within boards between the part time and full time trustees. In some instances, the effective working of the board has been severely diminished by internal wrangling. In one Ontario board some trustees are suing other trustees within the same board! In all boards, there have been increasing demands upon the time of senior administration by trustees who want more and more information upon which to make their decisions. Some administrative staff have found the demands extremely onerous, requiring them to increase dramatically their number of overtime hours a week.

More seriously, the growing politicization of a few full time trustees has seen some administrative actions deliberately challenged. In one board,a trustee, strongly believing that an administrative procedure was inappropriate, at his own expense took the matter to court and won his case. This type of action is rare; most disputes are settled in a more reasonable fashion. For example, the Toronto Board of Education for many years has seen a sharing of power between trustees and administration without open hostility being evident. It is worth noting in passing that the Toronto Board of Education is possibly the most politicized in Ontario.

Another consequence of increased trustee involvement has been an increase in the expense of a board's operation. Trustees spending more time on the job seek increased remuneration. They also request more and better office space (preferably near the administrative staff), more secretarial support and resources in the form of computers, telephones, and research assistants.

Time does indeed appear to be a critical factor in the evolving role of the trustee. In certain areas of Ontario, travel time precludes trustees from travelling more than once or twice a month to board meetings; it also precludes their visiting schools, many of which may be over 80 km. apart. Time, since the extension of funding to separate schools, has not been sufficient to permit Catholic Boards to move much beyond a concern for their survival. There has been little change in the trustees' role in Separate School Boards. Moreover, in most boards, time has not moved quickly for many older trustees. They are happy in their traditional roles of two decades ago and see no reason to challenge the administrators they have hired to manage their systems. But time has also had important implications for the selection of new persons to the trusteeship. For those who hold professionally demanding positions, time does not permit them to devote the day time hours that full time trustees use for committee meetings. As a result, their service is lost to such boards.

In conclusion, the decade of the 1990s will be a time of readjustment in many boards as new working relationships between trustees and administrators are devised. It is to be hoped that that time will be one of mutual trust and cooperation.

GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

THE CURRENT SITUATION IN ONTARIO

By

John H. House

The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

Paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the
Canadian Society for the Study of Education
Kingston, June, 1991

Governance and Accountability
The Current Situation in Ontario

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Introduction

It is not unusual, at any point in time, for there to be difficulties in specific jurisdictions of local governance of education, difficulties between school boards and officials, and difficulties between individual trustees and officials. It is unusual, however, for there to be difficulties in a province which appear to have spread and escalated over a four- or five-year period.

In Ontario, over the past five years, there have been signs of difficulties in the governance and management of local public school systems, particularly in Thunder Bay, Windsor, York Region and Victoria County. The difficulties have spread and escalated, and have been made manifest by some public school boards finding themselves divided into two groups, the traditionalists and the dissidents, with voting patterns which consistently reflect the division, by trustees suing school boards, by school boards suing trustees, and by officials threatening to sue both school boards and individual trustees.

On the one hand, there have been expressions of discontent by school trustees in disparate parts of the province. In general, those trustees expressing discontent want greater involvement in the governance of school boards, are very critical of perceived poor management by officials, and are very critical of the lack of interest of school boards in improving management practices. One strand of trustees expressing discontent recommend more central control by the Ministry of Education in the form of regulation. Another strand have great faith in the ability of individual trustees and school boards to improve management practices by officials if individual trustees and school boards have the power to do that. They see the basic difficulty lying in the Education Act.

Even though trustees in these two strands take different tacks, there are two common threads. The first is that these trustees see themselves as politicians who must be elected and therefore need visibility in the community, and who wish to be more involved in governance so that they can be more accountable to the electorate. The second is the perceived lack of accountability of officials to school boards for their corporate responsibilities.

On the other hand, the officials are puzzled by the trustee perceptions of poor management and lack of accountability. The officials recognize they are accountable to school boards for their corporate responsibilities, and believe they have been fully accountable. Officials express concern about the increase in involvement of trustees in the governance and management of school systems, resulting in increasing ambiguity in the roles of politicians and administrators and the increased burden that places on officials in attempting to address their responsibilities.

The difficulties were brought into focus by a committee of the Provincial Government. A committee of the Provincial Government examining matters of finance during the Fall of 1989 was made aware by some trustees of their expressions of discontent. In response to those expressions, the Third Report of the Select Committee on Education 1990 contained among others, Recommendation 27:

> "In consultation with the key partners in education, the Minister should examine the responsibilities and duties of Directors of Education under the Education Act and any other relevant matters in order to clarify and solidify the authority of trustees over Board program and financial decisions."[1]

[1]Select Committee Report, 1990

The reaction by trustees to this recommendation was mixed. Some viewed the recommendation as unnecessary and pejorative while others viewed the recommendation as timely and useful.

The reaction by Directors of Education to what was viewed as a peremptory recommendation on an issue that was not fully examined was straightforward, and the response was made in the form of a motion passed during a conference of public, separate and francophone chief executive officers:

> "BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Directors of Education attending the Annual Chief Executive Officials Conference representing a cross section of Boards across the province unanimously state their concern over Recommendation 27 and its comments on page 44 of the Third Report of the Select Committee on Education. Specifically the participating Directors of Education take issue with the statements which impugn the a) credibility, b) integrity and c) veracity of Directors, and with those who would seek to drive a wedge between trustees and board administration. The Directors of Education in the Province of Ontario recognize that local control over education rests with the elected trustees. As Directors, we reaffirm our desire to work with Boards of Trustees in the provision of quality educational programs and services for our students."

Organizational Responses

The Ontario Public School Officials Association

For many years, The Ontario Association of Educational Administrative Officials, with a membership composed of superintendents and directors of education from both the public and separate school systems, represented educational officials in the province. Two years ago, that organization disbanded and two new organizations were created, one composed of officials in

the public school systems and the other composed of officials in the separate school systems. The OPSOA represents officials in the public school systems.

The OPSOA has not responded formally to Recommendation 27, but has undertaken several initiatives to address the issue.

The President of OPSOA has discussed the issues directly with the Minister of Education.

The OPSOA has established a Task Force Committee to review the issues of Governance and Accountability to inform the members on these issues and to consider the means of addressing the issues directly with school trustees.

The OPSOA has invited the Ontario Public School Trustees Association to establish a joint committee to review the issues of Governance and Accountability common to trustees and supervisory officers. That invitation has been accepted. The OPSOA members on that joint committee will be drawn from the members of the OPSOA Task Force Committee.

Full discussions of the issues have been held among the members of the OPSOA in each region of the province.

An issue paper on Governance and Accountability is being prepared for the discussions with the OPSBA.

The Ontario Public School Boards Association

The OPSBA has not responded directly to Recommendation 27, but has taken several initiatives to address the issue.

The OPSBA has established a Task Force on Governance to review the issues of governance and accountability, and to consider appropriate means of addressing those issues.

The OPSBA held a forum for trustees entitled "Governance for the 1990's", on October 19, 1990.

The discussions and representations made at that forum were used in the development of a "Discussion Paper in Educational Governance." That paper is currently being discussed by members of school boards throughout the province, and will be revised to reflect the responses from school boards. The revised Discussion Paper will be used by the Task Force on Governance to inform its deliberations.

The OPSBA has accepted the invitation of the OPSOA to establish a Joint Committee to review issues of governance common to school boards and officials. OPSBA's representatives on the Joint Committee will be drawn from the membership of the Task Force on Governance.

The Ontario School Board Reform Network

The initiatives of the OPSBA have been somewhat complicated by the formation of the Ontario School Board Reform Network. The Reform Network is composed of a group of trustees who have been expressing discontent in disparate parts of the province, and who support Recommendation 27 and believe it to be timely and useful.

The Reform Network was formed in June, 1990, with twenty-five members. In January, 1991, the chairman of the Reform Network claimed fifty members from fifteen different school boards.

The focus of the Reform Network has been on Governance and the reform of the Education Act,[2] based on the argument that school systems are poorly managed by officials, school systems are poorly managed because the officials are not accountable to school boards, officials are not accountable to school

[2]Ontario Education Act

boards because the Education Act does not allow school boards to make the officials accountable, and therefore, to improve the governance of school boards the Education Act needs to be reformed. The Reform Network has offered three different models of governance reform, the Municipal Council Model, the Parliamentary Model and the Modified Education Act Model.[3] Of the three, the Municipal Council Model seems to be favoured.

Under the Ontario Municipal Act[4] the elected warden, reeve or mayor is designated as the head of the council and the Chief Executive Officer of the corporation. Councils are quite free to decide on their own administrative structures and whether or not there will be a Chief Administrative Officer. If the council wishes to have a C.A.O., the council is free to decide on the duties and responsibilities of the C.A.O. and to choose whoever it wishes to be the C.A.O. Most municipalities within a radius of fifty miles of Metro Toronto do have C.A.O.'s under a variety of titles, but some such as the Municipality of Newmarket and the City of Toronto do not.

The Reform Network has been actively recruiting members from incumbent trustees, and actively recruiting citizens sympathetic to its views to stand as candidates in the next election of school trustees to be held in the fall of 1991. When the OPSBA put out its "Discussion Paper on Educational Governance", and invited responses from school boards, the Reform Network put out its own discussion paper, entitled "Who Sets the School Board Agenda?", and invited responses from school boards. The Reform Network is clearly challenging the OPSBA for the leadership in representing trustees in the province.

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[3]"Who Sets the School Board Agenda?" 1990

[4]Ontario Municipal Act

In addition to the focus on governance, the Reform Network has advocated positions on educational finance and management such as the quality of school board audits, increased operating grant support to school boards, increased capital grant support to school boards and has called for an examination of the appropriateness of the property tax to finance the large scale costs of public education. As yet the Reform Network has not focussed on educational issues other than governance, finance and management.

Structure of Governance in Ontario

In terms of composition, municipal councils and School Boards are similar in that both are composed of local politicians elected directly to the council or school board. Municipal councils and school boards are very different, however, in terms of responsibilities. Municipal councils are responsible for the provision of a broad range of public services. School boards are responsible for the provision of a single, well-defined professional service. In terms of responsibilities, School Boards are similar to local boards of health. Boards of health are composed of locally elected politicians, who are not, however, elected directly to the boards.

The Ministry of Education is truly a policy ministry. The Minister is responsible for recommending educational policy to the Provincial Government and is responsible for the implementation of educational policy. The Ministry, however, does not directly provide public educational services. The responsibility for the provision of educational services to the public rests with school boards. Because of the Minister's responsibility for the implementation of educational policy, educational officials employed by school boards are required to be professional educators, approved by the Minister, and responsible

to the Minister for the implementation of educational policy. School boards are required to appoint an educational official as the Director of Education, the Chief Executive Officer of the Board. All of these responsibilities and relationships are set out in the Education Act.

It has been suggested that because Directors are responsible to the Minister for the implementation of educational policy, and responsible to the school board for the implementation of school board policy and for the management of the school system, the Director is in a contradictory position, responsible to two different often conflicting masters. It would appear that this could only be the case where Provincial Government policy and school board policy were in conflict. It is difficult to envision a change in the structure set out in the Education Act without significant changes in the responsibilities of the bodies which form that structure.

At the local level trustees and Directors have many responsibilities, all related to ensuring that the public is well served. As members of school boards, trustees have responsibilities to the electorate to ensure the provision of quality educational services, to ensure the school board functions well in provision of educational services, to ensure that school board policies are implemented and to ensure that the provision of educational services is managed well.

As Chief Executive Officers of school boards, Directors have many similar responsibilities, such as responsibility to the Minister for the implementation of educational policies, responsibility to assist the school board to function well in the provision of educational services, responsibility to recommend policies to the school boards to ensure the provision of quality educational services, responsibility to ensure the implementation of school

board policies, and responsibility to ensure that the provision of education services is managed well.

In recognition that accountability is not a simple issue, the Ministry of Education has pointed out, "In our case, accountability is a co-operative endeavour of the Ministry of Education and the school boards."[5] The various bodies and parties in this structure are made accountable for their responsibilities in a variety of ways, but largely through management procedures. Where a sense of lack of accountability arises, it suggests that the means are not in place to ensure accountability, or that the means in place are not working well. The difficulty is that each party in the structure works and has responsibilities in relation to the other parties in the structure, so that to ensure accountability, the means created must relate to the roles and responsibilities of each party and the relationships among the roles and responsibilities. To ensure accountability, roles and responsibilities and the relationships among the roles and responsibilities must be examined and the means created reflecting the various defined roles and relationships.

Perspective

Structures for school board governance can be quite complex. Some boards are structured rather simply, with elected trustees representing a majority language constituency. Others are more complex and may include elected trustees representing a minority language constituency, elected trustees representing separate school ratepayers where the separate secondary school has not been extended, and an appointed native band trustee. Some boards have all of these components with complex voting arrangements. Such complex

[5]Ontario Ministry of Education Memorandum 1991:B1
Memorandum To: Directors of Education
Subject: 1990 Annual Report of the Provincial Auditor

structures create many possibilities for difficulties to arise. It is clear, however, that the current difficulties do not stem from complex structures.

The root of the present difficulties lies in the trend for trustees to devote more and more of their time to trustee activity. The trend for politicians to devote more and more of their time to political activities has been evident in all levels of government in Canada. The trend has caused few difficulties at the federal and provincial levels of government where government is organized in the parliamentary model which accommodates the increased involvement well. The difficulties which have arisen at those two levels of government have largely been the personal difficulties of the politicians in arranging their personal finances, accommodations, and political activities. The trend, however, has caused and is causing difficulties at the local levels of government in both municipal governance and school board governance as politicians become more and more involved in the governance and management of local affairs. The trend has become known as the trend toward full-time local politicians.

In relation to municipal governance, the trend has been well studied and the difficulties which arise well documented in the United States, Great Britain and Canada.[6] The trend has not been as well studied in relation to school board governance. Studies in Ontario, however, have revealed the trend and some changes resulting from that trend.[7] In Ontario, the trend is most prevalent in large urban areas, where trustees receive higher honoraria and greater support in the form of offices and assistance by support staff. In the Metro Toronto area, for example, over the past twenty years, trustee honoraria have increased from $3,500 per year to $43,000 per year. In these areas, trustees

[6]Soncton and Woolner, 1989

[7]Davis, 1989

tend to be people without the need to earn an income, younger, and with a higher proportion being females. Trustees who spend a large proportion of their time as trustees see the role of the trustee much differently than trustees who do not.

The process by which the trend from part-time towards full-time local politicians takes place is an evolutionary one, where the changes take place incrementally, are not planned, and the implications of the change are unrecognized. Where this evolutionary trend occurs with an incremental change in roles, the result is a structural change in the role of the trustee and the role of the administrator which is not planned, acknowledged or examined. There are no job descriptions for trustees; the roles are created by incumbents. Since the changes in roles are not planned, acknowledged or examined, much role ambiguity is created. The ambiguity is further exacerbated by the fact that the structural relations between the two are not acknowledged to have changed, thus making any systematic or objective review of the situation very difficult, and the organizational learning required almost impossible. Open, explicit consideration of the issue between the two has been untenable because acknowledgement of the change may have meant lost ground for the officials, and new uncomfortable accountabilities and new responsibilities for trustees.

Research has demonstrated that when the distribution and assignment of responsibility and authority in organizations is ambiguous, organizational politics come to the fore as individuals and groups vie with one another to establish positions.[8] The greater the ambiguity, the more intense the internal tensions are likely to be. The cost to the organization is that a growing amount of its administrators' energy and time will be focussed internally on

[8]Woolner, 1983

managing an increasingly complex and demanding political relationship, and turned away from an external focus on the quality of service provided to the public. Effective high-performance organizations are externally focussed, concentrating their resources on clients served and the quality of service provided.[9]

The difficulties which arise from this ambiguity are often expressed in the question, "Who runs this system, the politicians or the administrators?" The question, however, is not who is ultimately responsible for governance. The question is what are desirable, well-defined roles for the politicians who represent the public and form the corporate body, and what are desirable well-defined roles for the officials who manage the system. These are the two elements of governance which must function well and together if the public is to be well served.

In relation to the current difficulties, it is clear there is great diversity in the province. As much as many trustees are expressing discontent, many trustees are expressing great satisfaction with their level of involvement in governance and with the management systems that provide for that involvement and for the accountability of officials. There do, however, appear to be some reasonable generalizations that can be made. There is more discontent expressed in urban areas than is small rural areas. There is more discontent expressed in areas of growth and expansion than in more stable areas. These generalizations seem to reflect the degree of public interest in educational issues expressed through rates of acclamation of trustees. In the last election in 1988 for public school trustees, the acclamation rate was 9.8% in cities and 51.4% in non-city areas. It is clear that the trend toward full-time trustees is more pronounced in some areas than it is in others, and it appears

[9]Peters, 1985

that some school boards have accommodated to the trend better than others have.

It does not seem useful to enter into the long debate on the advantages and disadvantages of full-time local politicians. Clearly there can be advantages. Trustees willing to spend a significant portion of their time as trustees can allow trustees to be more knowledgeable about educational and financial issues, and can allow for a more fully developed use of school board committees, which could allow opportunities for better planning, for a better examination of public issues, for a better examination in policy development, and for a better means of reasonable accountability for both trustees and educational officials. There can also be disadvantages. The greatest disadvantage occurs when politicians increase their involvement without a deliberate examination of what are desirable, well-defined roles for both politicians and administrators. Rather than enter into the debate, it appears to be more useful to leave the issue to the wisdom of those involved in each local area. Recognizing the diversity in the province, however, it is clear that any useful examination of the roles of politicians and administrators can only be made recognizing the variation in local circumstances and practices.

Conclusion

In preparation for the discussions of the Joint Committee to review issues of governance common to school boards and officials, the OPSBA and the OPSOA have identified a number of key issues of operations to be addressed. The OPSBA held a forum for trustees on "Governance for the 1990's" in October 1990 to examine issues of educational governance. In relation to the accountability of educational officials, the trustees attending that forum identified a number of

key issues of operations that they believed required monitoring policies or procedures from which indications of satisfactory performance can be obtained.

Those key issues were in four categories:

FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

- Budgeting
- Tendering
- Purchasing
- Use of external consultants
- Expense accounts

PUPIL TRANSPORTATION

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

- Hiring and promotion
- Performance appraisals
- Staff allocation
- Leaves of absence
- Absenteeism

PROGRAM REVIEW

- Evaluation of educational programs
- Evaluation of student achievement

During the past few months, a survey was made of OPSOA members seeking their views about these key areas. In relation to their own boards, officials were asked to identify those issues about which trustees express difficulties, and those issues for which procedures have been created which appear to work well. The responses clearly revealed the diversity in the province, with more difficulties being identified in urban areas than in rural areas. The responses revealed that in relation to most issues, in a high

proportion of cases procedures had been developed that were working well. The responses also revealed that these were significant issues worthy of being addressed in that at least 25% of the responses reported trustees expressing difficulties in relation to each issue. The highest proportion of difficulties were expressed in relation to the two issues in the Program Review category.

These issues, then, form a common set of issues about which both trustees and officials believe there are difficulties. It is in relation to this common set of issues, then, that trustees and officials may usefully examine the role and responsibilities of trustees, the role and responsibilities of officials, the relationships between these, and suitable means of providing for accountability.

It is difficult to speculate on the success of the Joint Committee of the OPSBA and the OPSOA to arrive at solutions so that the two elements of governance, the trustees who represent the public and form the corporate body, and the officials who manage the school system, may function well and together to service the public well. Complicating the situation are the influence of the Reform Network and the possible actions of the Provincial Government.

The test of the future of the Reform Network will be the results of the elections in the fall of 1991, in the form of the number of Reform Network members elected and the number of the newly recruited Reform Network candidates elected.

The current NDP Provincial Government is seen to the centrist, authoritarian, committed to good government and management of social affairs, and very clear about the necessity to have power to govern. In that view, the NDP Government is not apt to dispense power, to give up power, or

to take power away from those charged with management. Perhaps we can gain some insight from a recent report of a government steering committee. On January 17, 1991, the provincial government-appointed steering committee reviewing the Public Hospitals Act made its report on amendments relating to the governance of hospitals. The report concentrates power in the hands of the Chief Executive Officer. Doctors will report through a medical administrator who will report to the CEO. The report reverses the trend, and removes any possibility of doctors and other staff having representation on hospital boards. The responsibilities of hospital boards are clearly limited to long-range planning and policy-making in the form of statements of principles, values, purposes, goals and objectives.

Trustees and officials agree there are difficulties in relation to governance and accountability, and agree that it is desirable to address those difficulties jointly and directly. With that acknowledgement and agreement, and with a reasonable sense of good will, they may well be successful.

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THE ROLE OF THE FRANCOPHONE SCHOOL TRUSTEE IN ONTARIO

by

Guy G. Tétrault

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THE ROLE OF THE FRANCOPHONE SCHOOL TRUSTEE

Introduction

The role of the school trustee has been undergoing significant change during the last decade. Changes have been most apparent within the larger urban centres of Southern Ontario. Recent studies conducted in Southern Ontario by Davis (1989) have identified trends such as a significant increase in the amount of time spent on the trusteeship. This phenomenon has in turn caused many trustees to redefine their role in keeping with what they feel should be a full time commitment. In turn, several larger boards have increased trustee remuneration substantially.

One aspect of the broadening trustee role defined by Davis' research is that trustees are paying more attention to new curriculum policy development, to issues regarding accommodation and finance, to collective agreements, and to relationships not only with Ministry of Education officials but with closer working relationships with the administrators of the board. Many school boards now provide office space and support services for trustees within the administrative complex of the school district. This places administration and trustees in a closer working relationship than ever before.

The role of the trustee is therefore changing in many aspects. Decision making power in many administrative areas

which was at one time the sole responsibility of board administrators now is sought to be shared by trustees wanting more of this power. A few Ontario trustees have recently organized a "Reform Network" seeking to gain more power through legislation for the school trustee than is presently the case.

The actual type of person becoming a trustee also appears to be changing. Davis' research identifies the typical full-time trustee as being a woman or a retired male. Part-time trustees are more often men employed in professions or semi-professions. The research also shows a high degree of concern and disagreement amongst trustees over the most effective role to be assumed by trustees. House (1991) describes some of the evident conflicts between administrators and a growing number of trustees.

The changing role of trustees is also receiving attention from the Supervisory Officers' group which has commissioned House to study the trustee's evolving role and its implications. The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) has developed a set of courses with the expressed purpose of helping today's trustee cope with the many varying and challenging aspects they are encountering on the job.

Another aspect of the changing role of the school trustee was introduced into the educational scene once the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was proclaimed. This legistation extended the right to "minority" Francophones in Canada to receive an education in French and the right to have control of the governance of that education. Little research has been

conducted to date on the effect this legislation is having on the role of the trustee.

Francophone Education and Culture

When one examines the role of the trustee and narrows this examination to that of francophone trustees within the province of Ontario, the definition of French-language education must be considered. Tardif (1990) believes that a key component to French-language education is the relationship between language and culture. She quotes from the Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (1969), which states "Language is also the key to cultural development. Language and culture are not synonymous but the vitality of the language is a necessary condition for the complete preservation of a culture (p.8)."

If one considers language as the key to preserving a minority group's culture, it follows that the French-language schooling must then play the major role in cultural preservation. This theme is well represented in the Report of the Ministerial Commission in Ontario on Secondary Education in French (1972) as it states:

> L'école tient une place centrale dans la vie culturelle de la minorité linguistique. Par conséquent, il est important pour l'épanouissement culturel de la population francophone que les écoles jouent la part la plus complète dans ce domaine. Les écoles de langue française doivent vraiment être des écoles au service de la communauté, facilement accessibles à l'ensemble de la population, appartenant au groupe linguistique pour lequel elles ont été

crées. (p.51)

The Supreme Court of Canada's judgement in the appeal of Mahé et al. v Her Majesty the Queen (1990) also stresses the strong link between language and culture. The Court stated that the francophone population must have control of the governance of French-language instruction as "it is vital to ensure that their language and culture flourish. It is necessary because a variety of management issues in education, ex. curricula, hiring and expenditure can affect linguistic and cultural concerns (p.22)." Tardif concludes her discussion of the importance language has on the cultural preservation of minority Francophones by saying "minority-language rights imply equality of educational opportunity and attainment, linguistic survival, and reinforcement of cultural identity (p.409)."

Frenette and Gauthier (1990) discuss the vital importance that French-language instruction has played in the Franco-Ontarian community. They claim that the school has been considered by Francophones as the most important factor in retaining their culture. They state "De toutes les institutions chargées de la reproduction culturelle d'une communauté, c'est l'école qui a gardé l'attention soutenue des Franco-Ontariens (p.16)."

Duhamel (1987), in an address to the National Symposium on the Governance of French-language Schools, declared "culture is an integral part of education for the francophone; it has considerably less importance in English-language schools (p.6)."

His argument in defence of this statement was that English-language culture in Canada has never been threatened to the degree that the French culure has been. He concludes therefore, that the priority of culture in each linguistic group is different. Where the francophone group considers culture to be central to the educational system, the anglophone group considers it to be superfluous. This, he claimed, helped explain why English-speaking educators do not believe that governance of the education of French-speaking children by the Francophones is essential to the preservation and enhancement of their language and culture.

Paquette-Frenette (1985) claims that for the Francophones, nothing has occupied their attention and energy for the last century as has the subject of education. She describes the French school as being essential to the survival of the francophone community within Ontario. The following quote describes this conviction:

> Chez les Franco-Ontariens (nes), les institutions d'éducation constituent l'un des seuls milieux, hors de la famille, qui puisse être systématiquement conçue et organisé en fonction de la préservation et de la transmission de l'héritage culturel." (ACFO, 1984:3)

Paquette-Frenette also describes the French-language school as being more important to the francophone community than the Roman Catholic Church. She declares "Etant donné que l'église a perdu depuis plusieurs années son ascendant sur les Franco-Ontariens, l'école est devenue le point des luttes pour

l'épanouissement culturel (p.18)."

Churchill (1984) helps put the francophone sentiment towards French-language schools in perspective. In his discussion of the history of French-language education in Ontario, he discusses the effect that Regulation 17, passed in 1912, had on Francophones. This Regualtion 17 forbade the use of French as the language of instruction past the grade two level in Ontario schools. This Regulation was in force for nearly 15 years and was dropped with a "gentleman's agreement" in 1927. Churchill claims that this was the central event around which the francophone community developed. He states "More than for any other part of our society in Ontario, the school has been at the centre of consciousness of French-speaking Ontarians since before the turn of the century (p.76)."

With the above backdrop in mind, an examination of the goals and objectives of the Association française des conseils scolaires de l'Ontario (AFCSO) may shed light on certain aspects of the francophone trustee's role. The AFCSO plays a unique role in Ontario in that it has the mission "de promouvoir l'épanouissement éducatif et culturel des Franco-Ontariens." This organization has two objectives; first to effect a reform of Bill 75 in order to provide more control of French-language schools by Francophones; and secondly, to enable all school jurisdictions in Ontario to access French boards of education suited to their particular needs. As mentioned earlier, these objectives are clearly linked to the Legislative mandates of the Province of

Ontario.

Within the AFCSO's reference manual for their trustees, one finds a statement of vision for the French-language school in Ontario. This vision statement was accepted as a working document at the "46e assemblée générale de l'AFCSO" on April 21, 1990. It reads as follows:

1. Transmettre des connaissances et assurer le développement des habiletés et de l'autonomie;
2. Enraciner les élèves dans la culture;
3. Appuyer et stimuler culturellement la communauté.

This vision statement clearly demonstrates the import of the cultural role the school is asked to play within the francophone community. This in turn must affect the · le behavior of the francophone school trustee.

Conflict Amongst Francophones

In all likelihood, French-language education would continue to erode if it were not for Section 23 of the Charter. This Section constitutes a recognition that without some protective provision within the existing provincial structures, minority language education would continue to disapear. Tardif (1990) cites recent legal interpretations of Section 23 from Bastarache, Braen, Didier, and Foucher (1986) as indicating that this Section of the Charter was intended to encourage affirmative action to reduce linguistic assimilation of Francophones outside Québec.

This interpretation was confirmed by the Supreme Court of Canada in the Mahé case. The general purpose of Section 23 was said to be the preservation and promotion of Canada's two official languages and their respective cultures.

Heller (1986) develops the idea of "linguistic capital". As French gains more economic power in Canada, it becomes more popular. The passing of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms with its Section 23 has enabled minority languages to have more status. The creation and expansion of French Immersion programs is a good example of this higher linguistic capital. Heller stipulates that there remains a lack of consensus concerning the value of English and French as linguistic capital within the francophone population. Generalizing, Heller classifies working class Francophones as not being convinced of the value of a purely French-language education. It is seen as high linguistic capital only for the middle class Francophones.

Ogbu (1983 & 1978) examines various minority groups and the status ascribed to education by each of these groups. Ogbu develops a typology of three distinct levels which reflects the particular minority group's priorities vis-a-vis education. The three groups are: 1) autonomous minorities; 2) immigrant minorities; and, 3) castelike minorities. Paquette-Frenette (1985) develops an article which considers the diversity with which certain francophone groups view the status and use of the minority language. She adapts Ogbu's tripartite model to a "typologie" of francophone groups. In so doing,

Paquette-Frenette attempts to shed light on the many diverse attitudes amongst Francophones with regard to the autonomous francophone school boards. She describes the three "générations" within this model in the following manner:

> La première cherche à établir des structures parallèles à la majorité. La deuxième tente "d'assouplir les structures existantes" afin de tailler une place où les compétences linguistiques des francophones seront mises en valeur. La troisième enfin, crée d'emblée des structures toutes neuves, qui n'existaient pas auparavant, ni dans la majorité, ni chez les Franco-Ontariens, et qui reflètent une identité neuve. (p.13)

If Paquette-Frenette's "typologie" does indeed fairly categorize various types of Francophones, this could indeed shed considerable light on different individuals' values towards the governance issue and perhaps on different trustee approaches.

Frenette and Gauthier (1990) discuss aspects of choosing an educational system for one's child as also being a divisive matter at times among Francophones. Since there are French-language schools in Ontario in both the public and separate school systems, many Francophones felt tensions over making such a decision. Once the Ontario government extended full funding to Roman Catholic secondary schools, many schools were literally handed over to the separate system by the public school system. Frenette and Gauthier report that by 1988 there were 16.5 of 30.5 French-language schools handed over to the separate system.

Assimilation & Francophone Governance

Tardif (1990) compares statistics of educational success between Francophones and Anglophones. She cites from the 1981 Census of Canada which indicated that Francophones completed less schooling than Anglophones. There were 30% of Francophones who had not completed grade nine as comapred to only 15% of Anglophones. Churchill (1984) confirmed similar statistics found in Northern Ontario where he quoted the figure of 40% to 50% of the adult francophone population in Ontario having a grade eight education or less. Tardif continued by saying that Anglophones completed a university degree at the rate of 9.1% as compared to only 6.1% for Francophones. Tardif quotes Alberta Advanced Education's (1984) study which found that "postsecondary students whose parents had French as their mother tongue participated less (25.8% French as compared to 30.2% English) than any other group excpt First Nations people at the university level (p.403)."

Research has been conducted in "bilingual" or "mixed" schools with respect to achievement level of francophone versus anglophone students. Churchill, Frenette, and Quazi (1985) found that francophone students in these types of schools do less well academically than do the anglophone students within the same school. They concluded that the francophone students had been linguistically assimilated. Carey (1987) found lower English and French reading comprehensive skills amongst minority francophone students in "mixed" highschool programs. Magnet (1987) reported

that when francophone and anglophone students are grouped together in "mixed" schools, assimilation of the minority child as well as the francophone community occurs.

Porter, Porter and Blishen (1982) conducted a study where they compared Francophones in English schools and Francophones in French-language schools. They found the Francophones within the English schools as feeling inadequate to their English peers, constantly aware of their minority status, having a low academic self-concept and feeling incapable of doing university work. Francophones in French-language schools were able to forget about their minority status within the province since it was not so within their French classrooms.

Tardif (1990) discusses some of the research on schooling in one's first or second language. The ethno nguistic vitality of the linguistic community and the quality anc quantity of contact with the first and second languages apparently makes a difference. She relates the educational model proposed by researchers (Landry, 1985, 1987; Landry & Allard, 1987). The model calls for educating the minority francophone child in French to counterbalance the dominance of English in the larger milieu. Other research is quoted to show that minority students educated in their mother tongue do maintain their language better and also learn the second language at least as well as minority children schooled exclusively in the second language (Cummins, 1984, 1986; Hamers & Blanc, 1983; Landry & Allard, in press; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1984). Tardif concludes this argument by saying

that the French skills of the minority Francophone are less well established than the English skills of the majority Anglophone. She states "Schooling in the mother tongue is therefore essential to the minority-language child to ensure equal educational advancement (p.404)."

From the above discussion, some have taken the position which essentially says that Francophones within the province should be educated in homogeneous French-language schools. Ontario has ofcourse not experienced secondary French-language schools for very long. Once Regulation 17 was repealed, French could once again be used as the language of instruction in separate schools beyond grade two. However, this did not extend through to the end of highschool because it was held that the rights of separate school supporters extended only to control of education through grade ten. Secondary French-language education for many years was only provided for by a network of church supported Roman Catholic secondary schools. Thus, Churchill (1984) points out that in public secondary schools, the Francophones only had one fifth the chance of anglophone students of entering the year of schooling that prepared them for university in 1967-68.

The Ontario government announced that French as the language of instruction would be recognized for both elementary and secondary schools in 1967. Churchill (1984) highlights the accomplishments since then in the following manner:

By 1976, there were 24 homogeneous French high

> schools and 36 mixed high schools in the Province. In 1969, the first year after the reform was official in law, nearly 22,000 French-speaking high school students were enrolled in programs partially or entirely taught in French, and the percentage of them going into upper grades (except Grade 13) was rapidly approaching that of the remainder of the population. This dramatic shift in transition ratios between grades demonstrated, beyond a shadow of a doubt, the cause and effect relationship between language of instruction and educational participation. (p.80)

French Schooling and Conflict

Churchill (1984) discusses the recent history of French schooling in Ontario. In examining the period of time since 1967, he draws the parallel of the decentralization of education along with decisions aimed at helping Francophones. This decentralization allowed locally elected school trustees to have more power. Essentially, therefore, decision making powers were handed over to local school boards who were predominently made up of a majority of anglophone school trustees. Churchill claims that the higher the degree of central intervention, the more likely the minorities are to benefit from the policies decided in their favor. Therefore, it is not surprising that many educational disputes erupted in connection with what became the major issue of French-language secondary education: how to get the majority anglophone public school boards to agree to set up secondary school programs in models other than that of the "mixed" school.

The Symons Commission was introduced by the government in an attempt to solve some of these disputes. Churchill lists the

three main effects of this commission as being: 1) the tightening up of mandatory requirements for providing instruction in French; 2) the creating of "French Language Advisory Committees" (FLAC) elected by Francophones, which had to be consulted in relation to decisions affecting the schooling of their children; and, 3) the establishing of a mechanism for mediation known as the Language Commission of Ontario.

Churchill states that it was not uncommon for school boards to reject recommendations from the Languages of Instruction Commission of Ontario as well as direct requests from the Minister of Education. The example of the Essex County in the 1970's is presented. A special law had to be enacted by the Legislature in order to force the school board to create a homogeneous French secondary school. He goes on to cite the fact that 15 cases in 14 school boards where attempts by parents to obtain services apparently guarenteed under provincial policy and legislation were made but were rebuffed, hindered or delayed by school boards made up of a majority of anglophone trustees. Churchill concludes his examination of this period by saying "In a large number of cases the francophone minority could not count on the elected local trustees to deal sympathetically with their problems (p.84)."

It is not surprising then that Duhamel (1987) states that Francophones want "to be able to determine through the mechanisms currently available to their majority language counterparts, the type of education that their children will receive (p.5)."

Duhamel proceeds to explain that Francophones know best what kind of an education they want for their children. Francophones, he points out, truly believe they can manage their own educational systems better than can any other group do it for them.

Once the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was declared, the minority francophone populations were given rights to not only an education in their mother tongue, but under Section 23 of this Charter, provisions were made for the minority language group to have control of the governance of that education. In Ontario, the Ministry of Education interpreted this section of the Charter to mean that every qualifying Francophone requesting an education in French be extended that right. Further, the government provided for the governance of this education by enacting Section 277c of the provincial Education Act. This section states that if a board of education has at least 300 francophone resident students and/or if a minimum of 10% of its resident student population are Francophone, the board shall have a French-language Section.

The Ontario School Act lists the duties of boards as well as the specific duties and powers of the English and French sections of boards. This has given Francophones control over many more aspects of the governance of French-language education. However, the legal ramifications of this law are under review since the Supreme Court of Canada's judgement of the Mahé case held in March, 1990. Many Francophones continue to demand their own autonomous school boards with all of the powers of English

autonomous school boards.

The Francophone School Trustee

Who is the francophone school trustee in Ontario? What is the role of this francophone trustee? Does today's francophone trustee in Ontario perceive his/her role similarily to that of the anglophone trustee? Do francophone trustees believe they can exercise their perceived mandate within the present governing structure of French-language education in Ontario? What is the ideal governance structure for francophone education in Ontario as perceived by present francophone school trustees?

These and other questions are the focus of a study underway at OISE. The author has recently completed the field testing of a questionnaire which has been developed to specifically answer the above questions. Although many of the questions cannot be answered at this time, there are certain patterns apparently emerging from the initial field study of the instrument.

The questionnaire was developed in French. A number of questions were utilized from Davis' (1989) questionnaire on the role of the trustee in Ontario. However, there were a number of new questions developed to reflect the literature and the emerging trends within the field of francophone education. Six key francophone school trustees were selected from various sectors within the francophone educational community of Ontario. These trustees were asked to complete the pilot questionnaire. Once they had completed the questionnaire, an idividual interview

was held with each trustee.

The feedback obtained from this pilot study was utilized in restructuring the questionnaire. Many of the open ended questions were changed and now offer choices to trustees in the form of closed ended questions. Emerging patterns of responses were identified from the pilot study. It will be quite interesting comapre these emerging patterns with the responses from the total population of francophone school trustees from Ontario.

Emerging Patterns

The governance of francophone education in Ontario is presently divided into many distinct segments. There are presently two distinct French school boards n the province. The Toronto French board is a "public" board. The French board from the Ottawa-Carleton area houses both a public and a separate or Roman Catholic section. Responses from representatives from these boards appear to be different from what is found in a school board that has an English and a French section. The large majority of francophone trustees come from either public or separate boards which have a majority English section and a minority French section to the board.

There does appear to be more similarities between Davis' findings and the two autonomous French boards than with the boards that have English and French sections. Early findings show such things as work load and politics in the form of trustee

coalitions to be similar. However, when there are only three trustees on a French section of a board, they appear to be on many more committees than their English counterparts who share the workload with many more trustees. French sections which only have three trustees have much fewer trustee coalitions simply because of the lack of numbers.

Preliminary returns from the pilot study also point to a difference in working relationships between trustee and central office administration. In the case of the francophone situation, there appears to be more of a team spirit because of the continual pressure of assimilation of language and culture felt by the francophone community. There also appears to be a significant amount of cooperation between trustees from neighboring boards in French sections. The pilot study revealed a fair amount of time being spent by francophone trustees meeting with other trustees working on coalition building especially in the policy area of secondary schools.

The literature places a fair amount of importance on the francophone community believing that the preservation of their language and culture is a crucial factor for the educational system. The pilot study found similarities when trustees state that their "raison d'être" as far as the trusteeship goes is this important language and culture factor. When asked how their rate payers see their role, a surprising response in the pilot study was that the public do not really concern themselves with such questions. The public is seen almost as apathetic towards the

"nitty-gritty" of the logistics of school governance.

When examining the evolving role of the francophone trustee, it is interesting to note the significant amount of change that has taken place in Ontario over the last few years. The trustees speak of going from parent-teacher associations to French Language Advisory Councils which in turn led to French sections on approximately 70 school boards in the province. The trustees in the pilot study all express their unhappiness with the present situation of English and French sections on boards. They see the only answer for achieving their goals and objectives in seeing the arrival of totally autonomous francophone boards. This is also seen to be separated into autonomous public francophone boards separate from autonomous francophone Catholic boards. It will be interesting to compare this early interpretation to that of the total population of francophone trustees in the province.

The pilot study revealed the strong resolve francophone trustees have in wanting their own distinct school boards. Trustees identified their displeasure with having to meet with their anglophone counterparts in meetings of the whole board. Their unhappiness stems from the feeling of being outnumbered and still being misunderstood and prejudiced against. Their concern over acquiring autonomy is heightened by their concern over financial restrictions presently facing the province and therefore all school boards.

Once the study is complete, there should be data available to understand the perceptions and concerns of the present

francophone school trustees in Ontario. There may also be information useful to the provincial government who is now in the process of evaluating alternatives to the governance of francophone education. This is occurring in every province in order to comply with the Supreme Court judgement in the Mahé case in March 1990.

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